

Dear Mr. Greenwood:

Thank you for your statements made during the public meetings of the Mississippi River Commission in Memphis, Tennessee, and Greenville, Mississippi, on April 8 and 9, 2003, respectively. In your statements you described the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) project as a public works success story; emphasized the additional funding needs of the Memphis District while describing several projects in your area; expressed concern about the need for clay gravel on the levee road; and pointed out severe bank failures at Mhoon Bend in Tunica County. Your statement also included support and request for additional funds for the Upper Yazoo Project; the Sardis, Arkabutla, Enid, and Grenada flood control reservoirs; the Sunflower River System; the South Delta project; and the Mississippi Delta Headwaters project. You also discussed the need for Sections 14, 205, and 208 projects in your district, the need to increase the limits for these projects, and the need to make the eligibility process more competitive. You indicated that your board strongly opposes the proposal to use money from the Inland Waterways Trust Fund to pay for operation and maintenance costs. In your statement, you indicated that you do not support any actions that would transfer all or part of the Civil Works mission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and "out-sourcing" present positions of the Civil Works function.

The Commission recognizes, as you emphasized, the MR&T project success story. The Nation has enjoyed a significant return for each dollar that has been expended. For every dollar invested, the Nation receives \$25 in benefits. The Commission

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also recognizes efforts made by you and your board to include additional funds in the Fiscal Year 2004 budget for the Austin relief wells, Trotter's berm extension, and Hillhouse relief wells.

Your concerns about the gravel on the access road on the levee crown have been noted. Unfortunately, gravel is a low priority item relative to other maintenance items. The Memphis District staff will continue to perform annual inspections to determine if gravel needs are critical and require immediate attention. At that time, the needs will be assessed relative to other maintenance items.

The Memphis District is scheduled to repair the failures of the Mhoon Bend revetment in Tunica County this construction season. The repairs will consist of articulated concrete mattress and riprap paving which will protect top bank and the Mississippi River navigation alignment, as well as eliminate the potential threat to the safety of the citizens in the Mississippi Delta.

The Commission appreciates your comments concerning the progress we have made together as partners on the Upper Yazoo Projects (UYP). This is an important project, and we agree it is critical to the people of the north Delta. The Vicksburg District is executing this project as quickly as possible. We have two construction contracts underway, which will extend the flood reduction benefits of the UYP to Money, Mississippi, and construction should begin on UYP Item 7 structures this summer. The Commission commits its continued support of this project and will do whatever it can to assure adequate funding.

The Commission shares your concern for the aging structures and equipment at the four north Mississippi lakes and the necessity for maintenance and upgrading. You can be assured that the safety and sustained operability of these dams have top priority at these projects. The Vicksburg District is aware of these requirements and has been rehabilitating the structural components over the last several years to the extent that funding has allowed. The Conference Report for the Fiscal Year 2003 Omnibus Appropriation Act added \$11,030,000 to budgets for these lakes for additional maintenance. This additional funding

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will allow the continuation of contracts to restore the integrity of riprap protection on Arkabutla and Sardis dams; construct a permanent tailwater control weir in the Arkabutla emergency spillway; complete the earthquake stability study for Arkabutla dam; and make repairs and improvements to the intake and outlet structures at Arkabutla, Enid, and Grenada dams.

Regarding the Big Sunflower River Maintenance Project, the Vicksburg District is progressing with the necessary studies to complete the ongoing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The draft report is scheduled for completion in November 2003 and the final SEIS a year later. The next item of

work can be awarded as soon as the National Environmental Policy Act process is complete and a water quality certification is secured. The Commission appreciates the Levee Board's continued support to provide this much needed maintenance for the Delta region. We pledge our commitment to seek adequate funds to continue the project.

The Commission appreciates your board's support regarding the Yazoo Backwater project. Pending resolution of comments received on the draft Yazoo Backwater Area Mississippi Reformulation Report, our plans call for the pumping plant to be 35 percent designed by the end of this calendar year with the design completed in October 2005. We commend the success the delta community has experienced in securing funding for this work by working with members of Congress. We are committed to executing the Yazoo Backwater project to the fullest extent possible.

The Vicksburg District acknowledges the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee Board's tireless efforts on behalf of its constituents in support of the Mississippi Delta Headwaters Project (DHP). We have 12 ongoing construction projects in 6 of the 16 DHP watersheds. The projects consist of one riser pipe grade control structure in the Batupan Bogue watershed; five box culvert grade control structures and one channel improvement in the Yalobusha River watershed; one riser pipe grade control structure, one embankment protection, and one bank stabilization in the Coldwater River watershed; one bank stabilization in the Long Creek watershed; and one floodwater retarding structure in the Black Creek watershed. All of these

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projects are part of a basin-wide approach to prevent erosion and sediment transport in the respective watersheds. We are continuing design and/or real estate for an additional 44 construction items in the DHP watersheds.

The Commission agrees with you that the funding limits for Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) projects should be increased; however, as you stated, this will require Congressional action. The Memphis and Vicksburg Districts look forward to working with you and your board in pursuit of CAP projects. If you have any questions regarding the CAP program, please contact Mr. Dennis Abernathy, Memphis District CAP

Manager, at 901-544-0798 or Ms. Renee Turner, Vicksburg District CAP Manager, at 601-631-7064.

The Commission continues to hear from those who are opposed to the use of the Inland Waterways Trust Fund for maintenance activities. The Commission has passed your concern and that of others up the chain of command to the Chief of Engineers and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

The Commission appreciates receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission